IDEAL BEAUTY

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1860.

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LADY FLORA.

"For since the time when Adam first
Embraced his Eve in happy hour,
And every bird of Eden burst
In carol, every bud to flower,
What eyes, like thine, have waken'd hopes?
What lips, like thine, so sweetly join'd?
Where on the double rosebud droops
The fulness of the pensive mind;
Which all too dearly self-involved,
Yet sleeps a dreamless sleep to me;
A sleep by kisses undissolved,
That lets thee neither hear nor see:
But break it. In the name of Wife,
And in the rights that name may give,
Are clasp'd the moral of thy life,
And that for which I care to live."

TENNYSON.

FRANCES.

"Do but look on her eyes, they do light
All that love's world compriseth!
Do but look on her hair, it is bright
As love's star when it riseth!
Do but mark her forehead, smoother
Than words that soothe her!
And from her arched brows, such a grace
Sheds itself through the face,
As alone, there triumphs to the life,
All the gain, all the good, of the elements' strife.

"Have you seen but a bright lily grow,
Before rude hands have touch'd it?
Have you mark'd but the fall of the snow,
Before the soil hath smutch'd it?
Have you felt the wool of the beaver?
Or swan's down ever?
Or have smelt o'the bud of the briar?
Or the nard in the fire?
Or have tasted the bag of the bee?
O, so white! O, so soft! O, so sweet is she."

BEN JONSON.

THE DUCHESS.

"Another minute, and I had entered,
When the door opened, and more than mortal
Stood, with a face where to my mind centered
All beauties I ever saw or shall see,
The Duchess—I stopped, as if struck by palsy.
She was so different, happy and beautiful,
I felt at once that all was best
And that I had nothing to do for the rest,
But wait her commands, obey, and be dutiful.
Not that, in fact, there was any commanding.
I saw the glory of her eye,
And the brow's height, and the breast's expanding,
And I was hers to live or die.
As for finding what she wanted,
You know God Almighty granted
Such little signs should serve his wild creatures
To tell one another all their desires,
So that each knows what its friend requires,
And does its bidding without teachers."

Robert Browning.

MARY.

"As streams that run o'er golden mines,
Yet humbly, calmly glide,
Nor seem to know the wealth that shines
Within their gentle tide, Mary!
So, veil'd beneath the simplest guise,
Thy radiant genius shone,
And that which charm'd all other eyes,
Seem'd worthless in thy own, Mary!"

MOORE.

ADELINE.

"What hope or fear or joy is thine ?
Who talketh with thee, Adeline ?
For sure thou art not all alone ;
Do beating hearts of salient springs
Keep measure with thine own ?
Hast thou heard the butterflies
What they say betwixt their wings ?
Or in stillest evenings
With what voice the violet woos
To his heart the silver dews ?
Or when little airs arise,
How the merry bluebell rings
To the mosses underneath ?
Hast thou look'd upon the breath
Of the lilies at sunrise ?
Wherefore that faint smile of thine,
Shadowy, dreaming Adeline ?"

Tennyson.

MARGARET.

"O SWEET, pale Margaret,
O rare, pale Margaret,
What lit your eyes with tearful power,
Like moonlight on a falling shower?
Who lent you, love, your mortal dower
Of pensive thought and aspect pale,
Your melancholy, sweet and frail
As perfume of the cuckoo-flower?
From the westward winding flood,
From the evening-lighted wood,
From all things outward you have won
A tearful grace, as tho' you stood
Between the rainbow and the sun.
The very smile, before you speak,
That dimples your transparent cheek,
Encircles all the heart, and feedeth
The senses with a still delight
Of dainty sorrow without sound,
Like the tender amber round,
Which the moon about her spreadeth,
Moving thro' a fleecy night."

TENNYSON.

MYRA.

"O THOU, whose tender serious eyes
Expressive speak the mind I love;
The gentle azure of the skies,
The pensive shadows of the grove;

"O mix their beauteous beams with mine,
And let us interchange our hearts;
Let all their sweetness on me shine;
Pour'd through my soul be all their darts.

"Ah! 'tis too much! I cannot bear
At once so soft so keen a ray:
In pity then, my lovely fair,
O turn those killing eyes away!

"But what avails it to conceal
One charm, where nought but charms I see?
Their lustre then again reveal,
And let me, Myra, die of thee!"

THOMSON.

CELIA.

"Drink to me only with thine eyes,
And I will pledge with mine;
Or leave a kiss but in the cup,
And I'll not look for wine.

"The thirst that from my soul doth rise
Doth ask a drink divine,
But might I of Jove's nectar sup,
I would not change for thine.

"I sent thee late a rosy wreath,
Not so much honouring thee,
As giving it a hope that there
It could not withered be;

"But thou thereon didst only breathe,
And sent'st it back to me,
Since when, it grows and smells, I swear,
Not of itself, but thee."

Ben Jonson.

ISABEL.

"Eyes not down dropt nor over bright, but fed
With the clear-pointed flame of chastity,
Clear, without heat, undying, tended by
Pure vestal thoughts in the translucent fane
Of her still spirit ; locks not wide dispread,
Madonna-wise, on either side her head ;
Sweet lips whereon perpetually did reign
The summer calm of golden charity,
Were fixed shadows of thy fixed mood,
Revered Isabel, the crown and head,
The stately flower of female fortitude,
Of perfect wifehood, and pure lowlihead."

Tennyson.

LUCY.

"SHE shall be sportive as the fawn,
That wild with glee across the lawn,
Or up the mountain springs ;
And hers shall be the wreathing balm,
And hers the silence and the calm
Of mute, insensate things.

"The floating clouds their state shall lend
To her,—for her the willow bend,
Nor shall she fail to see,
Even in the motions of the storm,
Grace that shall mould the maiden's form
By silent sympathy."

WORDSWORTH.

ELEÄNORE.

"SOMETIMES, with most intensity
Gazing, I seem to see
Thought folded over thought, smiling asleep,
Slowly awaken'd, grow so full and deep
In thy large eyes, that, overpower'd quite,
I cannot veil, or droop my sight,
But am as nothing in its light:
As tho' a star, in inmost heaven set,
Ev'n while we gaze on it,
Should slowly round his orb, and slowly grow
To a full face, there like a sun remain
Fix'd—then as slowly fade again,
And draw itself to what it was before;
So full, so deep, so slow,
Thought seems to come and go
In thy large eyes, imperial Eleänore."

TENNYSON.

THE LADY CONSTANCE.

"Oh, thou art fairer than an Indian morn,
Seated in her sheen palace of the East.
Thy faintest smile out-prices the swelled wombs
Of fleets, rich glutted, toiling wearily
To vomit all their wealth on English strands.
The whiteness of this hand should ne'er receive
A poorer greeting than the kiss of kings;
And on thy happy lips doth sit a joy,
Fuller than any gathered by the gods
In all the rich range of their golden heaven."

Alexander Smith.

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